‘Enjoy Your Self’: Lotze on Self-Concern and Self-Consciousness

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Abstract: Current work on first-person thought takes its distinctive feature to be epistemological. First-person thinking is non-observational and immune to errors to which other varieties of thought about us are open. In contrast, the nineteenth century philosopher Hermann Lotze (1817-81) put the distinctive concern we have for the object of first-person thought at the center of his account. His arguments suggest that first-person thought is essentially evaluative. In this paper I will reconstruct and defend the core of Lotze’s view of self-consciousness.

1. Introduction

Imagine observing a person that you seem to see through a window. You notice that their hair needs to be cut and their shirt is crumpled. But you have no particular concern for the person you see and soon your attention wanders off. However, if you had realized that what looked like a window was actually a mirror and that *you* are this person, things would have been very different. For each of us takes a unique concern in him or herself and what belongs to him or herself. William James comments that the ‘altogether unique kind of interest which each human mind feels in those parts of creation which it can call me or *mine* may be a moral riddle, but it is a fundamental psychological fact’ (James 1890 I, 289). Here I will only be concerned with the psychological fact.

What constitutes the difference between what is me or mine and what is not-me or mine such that what is I or mine has this unique kind of interest for me?

Herman Lotze's (1817-81) answer to his question was very influential in the 19th century.[1] Lotze's starting point is the thought that felt evaluations – taking pleasure in or being pained by something – are the source of the distinction between us and the rest of the universe. These evaluations are also the source of our first-person concept; on them 'will in each later development rest the distinctive intimacy of self-reference [Innigkeit der Zurückbeziehung] which belongs to the concept of self […]' (Lotze 1846, 128; my translation).[2] Lotze takes it therefore to be a mistake to explain the first-person concept as, roughly, *the thinker of these thoughts*. Doing so severs the connection between first-person thought and felt evaluations and we end up with a reflexive, but not a first-person concept.

In this paper I will reconstruct and develop Lotze's evaluative view of mental ownership and first-person thought. I will argue that his view of mental ownership cannot be defended: if a thinker takes pleasure or pain in a mental activity, it is hers. Lotze's condition is sufficient, but we will see that it is not necessary. However, felt evaluations are necessary for a thinker to acquire and exercise a genuine first-person concept and not merely a reflexive concept. The first-person concept is a 'thick' concept: it is in part evaluative. The value and interest of Lotze's discussion of felt evaluation lies therefore mainly in the light it sheds on first-person thinking.

The plan of the paper is as follows: I will start by introducing the distinction between self and not-self (sect. 2). In section 3 I will outline two ways to draw this distinction: (a) the distinction is drawn by a relation to the will as Fichte and his followers argued or (b) by epistemic properties as contemporary authors hold. [3] Lotze's arguments put pressure on both (a) and (b); the arguments are based on intuitions elicited by his comparison between a worm that squirms in pain with an affectless angel. Lotze suggests that the worm is better off than the angel: it possesses

at least the beginnings of self-consciousness while this achievement is out of reach for the angel (sect. 4). In section 5 I will assess the view of mental ownership Lotze proposed in response to the worm/angel comparison. According to Lotze, first-person thought ('self-consciousness') rests on felt evaluations. In section 6 I will reconstruct his diagnosis of the tempting mistake to ignore felt evaluation in an account of the first-person concept and to hold that this concept is exhaustively characterized by its reflexivity. In section 7 I will make a proposal about how to correct the mistake in the spirit of Lotze's approach.

2. The Unparalleled Distinction between Self and Not-Self

If you are like me, you will easily conceive of yourself and distinguish yourself, including your body, from the rest of the universe. Lotze brings out how remarkable this distinction is:

> Our distinction of ourselves from things does not resemble that which we make between two other objects; on the contrary, the contrast between ourselves and what is not ourselves manifests itself as unconditioned in meaning and extent, and not to be compared with any other. (Lotze 1885 I, 249/1856, 270-1)

The distinction between myself and everything else is of incomparable importance and the importance of the distinction manifests itself in various ways. Compare, for example, the property of *being my experience* (thought) with the property of *being bitter*. Whether you draw the distinction between bitter and not-bitter depends on your desires and, broadly speaking, interests. If I take something to be bitter (not-bitter), I

may take an interest in it or not. It is perfectly possible to regard something as bitter (not-bitter) and have no desires with regard to it; one may be perfectly neutral. Whether one takes an interest in the bitter object depends on one's desires. However, if x is *my* experience or thought, I am not neutral with respect to it; I take an interest in it, independently of what my further desires are. This is what Lotze has in mind, I think, when he talks about the *unconditioned nature* of the distinction between self and not-self. We seek to make the me/not-me distinction independently of other interests or desires we have.[4] There is no such general drive to draw other distinctions. Neither Lotze nor James explains the unique kind of interest further. They take for granted that it is clear to us what this interest is when we reflect on what we call 'me' or 'mine' and how we feel about it in contrast to what we call 'yours'. I will follow them in this point.

3. Lotze's Competitors: Fichteans and the Epistemic View

Let us consider the distinction between the self and the non-self to which we attach incomparable value and everything else ('the self/non-self distinction' for short). We can ask three questions about the self/non-self distinction:

> *The Constitutive Question*: What constitutes the self/non-self distinction?
>
> *The Awareness Question*: How do we come to be aware of the self/non-self distinction? How do we come to think or treat some things as being parts of us? (See Lotze 1846, 126)
>
> *The Question about First-Person Thought*: How do we form our first-person concept and what is its content when it is formed? (See Lotze 1846, 126-7)

I will return to the last question in section 6 and 7. The Awareness Question is connected to what today is sometimes called ‘mental ownership’ or ‘sense of mineness’ or simply ‘mineness’.[5] Lotze claims that the distinction between self/non-self is based on our thinking already possessing an ‘immediately experienced certainty of itself, an earlier for-me(it)-ness [Fürsichsein]’. [6] Mental events and processes strike us as belonging to us and not to someone else or to no one at all. According to Lotze (and James), we can draw the self/non-self distinction because our thoughts and experiences have this immediate for-me-ness.

In his approach to these questions Lotze opposes Fichte. According to Fichte, the self/non-self distinction is acquired; it is not given in the way our first perceptions represent things. We become aware of the self/non-self distinction by what Fichte calls ‘Anstoss’. Self is distinguished from non-self when we experience that a striving encounters an obstacle and is checked.[7] Dilthey provides a concise formulation of the basic thought:

> The schema of my experience in which my self distinguishes from itself the object lies in the relation between the consciousness of willful movement and the consciousness of the resistance by which it is met. (Dilthey 1890, 98; my translation)[8]

So in the awareness that our will is checked we come to distinguish our self from the rest of the universe. Already the unborn embryo is supposed to possess a ‘dark, dreamlike consciousness of the separation of its own life and from a surrounding conditioning something’ (Dilthey 1890, 100; my translation).

This idea informs the work of physiologists like Johannes Müller and his

student Herman von Helmholtz. Helmholtz suggests that the self/non-self distinction is the distinction between what we can change by conscious willing and what is governed by a force independent of our will.[9] What about *prima facie* passive perceivings? They are still under our control in the sense that it is up to us to attend to them or not.[10]

According to Fichteans, we feel that we have power over our thoughts, this constitutes our sense that these thoughts are ours. Contemporary philosophers take this distinction to be drawn by an epistemic property. Campbell is a representative example of such an epistemic account of mental ownership. He argues that the ordinary notion of ownership has two strands:

> Strand 1: 'For a token thought to be truly mine, the thought must have been generated by me.' (Campbell 2002, 36)

A token is generated by a thinker if it is the product of cognitive dispositions of the thinker.

> Strand 2: 'The owner of a thought, we would ordinarily take it, is the one with some especially direct access to that thought, who can self-ascribe it otherwise than on the basis of observation.' (ibid.)

Campbell (ibid.) points out that the two strands can come apart. In cases of thought-insertion, a thinker is under the impression that a thought she can self-ascribe is not produced by her. I will set these complications for the two-factor account aside for the purposes of this paper.

Lotze's approach to mental ownership and consequently his approach to first person thought puts him in opposition to both Fichteans and the epistemic view. In the next section I will introduce Lotze's comparison between an omniscient angel and a crushed worm that he uses to mobilize intuitions that speak against Fichteans as well as the Epistemic View.

4. The Cold Angel and the Crushed Worm

Lotze rejects Fichte's way of drawing the self/non-self distinction for a theological reason. God is a self and can distinguish himself from all other things. This divine ability should not depend on the existence of something that is an obstacle to his activities.[11] He points his readers to a different, 'easier path' to his own Anti-Fichtean view:

> A different consideration has already ([1885] I, p. 249ff [1856, 270 ff]) led us by an easier path to the same result, and we may refer the reader for explanation and completion to what is said here. The discussion referred to showed us that all self-consciousness rests on the ground of an immediate self-feeling [unmittelbares Selbstgefühl] that cannot arise from the recognition of an opposition to the external world, but, in turn, is the cause, that this opposition as not comparable to any other opposition between two objects, can be sensed [empfunden werden kann]. (Lotze 1885 II, 679-80/1864, 567-8; in part my translation)[12]

If the source of the distinction between self and non-self lies in an immediate feeling, it does not require consciousness of willing and experience of *Anstoss*. A purely

passive thinker could come to distinguish itself from the world.

What is the ‘easier path’ to Lotze’s conclusion? He compares a worm writhing in pain with an omniscient angel:

> The crushed worm writhing in pain undoubtedly distinguishes its own suffering from the rest of the world, though it can understand neither its own Ego nor the nature of the external world. But the consummate intelligence of an angel, did it lack that feeling, would indeed be capable of keen insight into the hidden essence of the soul and of things, and in full light would observe the phenomena of its own self-reflection, but it would never learn why it should attach any greater value to the distinction between itself and the rest of the world than to the numerous differences between things in general that presented themselves to its notice. (Lotze 1885 I, 250-1/1856, 272-3)

The angel – let us call him ‘Michael’ – knows everything about himself. Yet he cannot conceive of himself as something of special concern: he is for himself only one thing among others and he does neither make nor would be able to understand the self/non-self distinction. In contrast, the crushed worm let us call him ‘Fafnir’ – lacks any knowledge, yet he shows a basic form of self-concern and is, similar, to an embryo darkly aware of the self/non-self distinction. However, Fafnir need not be able of conscious willing; it only needs to feel pain or pleasure. Hence, Fichteans look for the ground the self/non-self distinction in the wrong place.

Let’s develop the contrast between the crushed worm and the omniscient angel in more detail. I will start with the worm.

4.1 The Crushed Worm

Fafnir can neither judge that things are so-and-so nor come to know facts about itself or its surroundings. Yet, Lotze argues, it distinguishes 'its own suffering from the rest of the world'. Fafnir's experiences have an 'immediate for-me(it)-ness'; they are given to him 'as belonging to him'. But this immediate for-me-ness cannot consist in self-ascriptions. So what does it consist in?

Let's start by setting aside a misleading remark by Lotze. He holds that feelings of pleasure and pain do the main work in an account of mental ownership. But he sometimes describes these in a misleading way. Sometimes, he calls such a feeling 'self-feeling' or 'self-enjoyment' (*Selbstgenuss*) and describes it as the feeling of the value or worth of identity or a reflexive relation. Consider his description of what Michael lacks in comparison to the writhing worm:

> This perfect knowledge would indeed imply that our own being [nature] had become to us clearly objective [gegenständlich], objective in such a sense, however, that our own self would appear to us but one among many objects; *the intimacy with which in our actual self-consciousness we feel the infinite worth of this relating to ourselves* [dieser Zurückbeziehung auf uns selbst] *would still remain unknown and unintelligible*. *Like all values given to objects of thought, this* [dieser] *too is apprehended only by means of feelings of pain and pleasure*. Not as thought, but as felt in its immediate value for us does the identity of the thinker and the thought form the foundation of our self-consciousness, and once for all lift the distinction between us and the world beyond all comparison with the differences by which it discriminates between one object and another. (Lotze 1885 I, 250/1856, 272; my emphasis)

In the German text, the gender of the anaphoric pronoun ‘dieser’ in the second sentence makes clear that it refers to the value of standing in a reflexive relation. Lotze goes on to say, further, that we feel the immediate value of the identity of thought and thinker. However, the idea that we feel the value of the obtaining of a relation does not sit comfortably with any of the examples Lotze gives. The crushed worm is not pained by *being identical to itself*. Rather, it feels pain in a body part and thereby this body part is distinguished from all other parts of the world. Moreover, how could my enjoyment that I am having these experiences be the basis for self-consciousness? It seems already to require the possession of self-consciousness. These internal problems suggest that self-feelings do not involve the first-person notion or ascribe reflexive relations. We enjoy or are pained by experiences and thereby feel their value and ‘own’ them.

Let’s expand on this. Fafnir’s experiences or activities have immediate for-him-ness if, and only if Fafnir takes (non-instrumental) pleasure or pain in them.[13] How are Fafnir’s activities given to him as ‘belonging to him’? By feeling painful or pleasurable to him. Lotze frames his answer to the Awareness Question in the third volume of *Mikrokosmos* in terms of mental ownership: ‘in any single feeling the being that is for itself [Fürsichseiende] owns itself only in part […]’ (Lotze 1885 II, 681/1864, 569; my translation). Fafnir owns parts of itself in this sense: the parts whose value he feels seem thereby to be his. It owns itself *only in part in feeling* because it enjoys or is pained only by a phase of its activities.

In order to get a better grip on Lotze’s notion of a non-conceptual sense of mental ownership one can think of the sense of ‘my’ that is operative in ‘my friend’ and its opposite ‘my foe’. One *owns* mental activities in felt evaluation in the sense in which one is distinctively related to things one loves or hates. Someone is my friend if

I non-instrumentally value him or her and s/he values me in the same way. Lotze applies this model to the sense of ownership of thoughts and experiences: an experience or thought seems to be ours if, and only if, we feel their value by taking pleasure or pain in them. Feelings of pain and pleasure apprehend goodness/badness; they are felt evaluations.[14] All values given to objects of thought are 'apprehended only by means of feelings of pain and pleasure' (Lotze 1885 I, 250/1856, 272]). If I enjoy something, it is intrinsically good; if something pains me, it is intrinsically bad. I need no further reasons to evaluate it as good or bad; the feeling suffices.

James provides another suggestive pair of terms that helps one to grasp the sense of 'being mine':

> This quality of warmth and intimacy and immediacy is what Peter's *present* thought also possesses for itself. So sure as this present is me, is mine, it says, so sure is anything else that comes with the same warmth and intimacy and immediacy, me and mine. (James 1890 I, 239. See also ibid, 330-1)

Intimacy and *warmth* is what I feel towards *my* friends. (This intimacy can also consist in a felt dislike.) In a similar sense, if a thought has intimacy and warmth, it feels to be mine.

Compare this to Fichtean and epistemic views of mental ownership.

First, the Fichtean view. Since Fafnir may take pleasure in perceiving without feeling the *Anstoss*, Fichteans are on the wrong track. The *Anstoss* is not necessary for drawing the distinction between *self* and non-self; immediate for-me-ness is.

Secondly, the epistemic view. The writhing worm is pained by some experiences and this makes these experiences seem to belong to him. But the worm

cannot self-ascribe the experiences; it cannot recognize or come to know that it has the experience in question. But it does not confuse its own mental life, primitive as it may be, with external reality.[15] Lotze concludes that self-ascription of a mental activity or event is not necessary for mental ownership. It is, for example, a 'fruitless wisdom' to deny self-consciousness to animals (ibid). [16] If a thought seems to be mine if, and only if, I take pleasure or pain in it, it is not surprising that we take a special interest in our experiences. For if mental ownership requires valuing experiences, the mere fact that an experiences seems to be *mine* makes it an object of distinctive interest to me. Things that appear to be valuable attract interest.

4.2 Michael, the Omniscient Affectless Angel, and the Epistemic View

Michael has in abundance what Fafnir lacks: Michael is omniscient and epistemically perfect. Let's take the complex property *P* that is a conjunction of all properties that Michael has. Michael knows directly and non-observationally that there is exactly one thing that has *P*. Michael can distinguish between himself and everything else: he knows that there is only one thing that has *P* and everything else lacks *P*. But Michael is for himself just 'one object among many others'. To use James's picture of two unequal halves of the universe, Michael can distinguish himself from everything else in the universe, but for him the universe does not divide into a part about which he is distinctively concerned and the rest.

Lotze himself used another picture to make the gap between distinguishing knowledge about oneself and concern for oneself vivid:

> [E]ven if we could correctly and accurately enumerate the peculiar characteristics that distinguish our soul from others, we should still have no

> reason to take the idea so acquired for more than the *indifferent representation* [gleichgültige Gemälde] of a being somewhere existent, and as completely distinct from a second as a third is from a fourth. If, further, it did not escape our notice that the being so clearly seen through in the light of perfect knowledge was the very same as that which at this moment completed its intuition of itself, we would indeed have given, in this actually accomplished self-reflection, the last characteristic crowning touch to the picture of that being, *but we would still be far from having reached anything so significant as what in actual life we know and possess as self-consciousness.* (Lotze 1885 I, 249-250/1856, 272, in part my translation; my emphasis)

Michael has a perfect, but *indifferent representation* of himself because he lacks what the crushed worm has. The crushed worm suffers and feels pain in some parts of its body. Michael doesn't; he may not even have a body. But we can spin out Lotze's example by assuming that there is no thought or perception that pains the bodiless Michael; he has not affect at all. He is still able to self-ascribe experiences, yet he does not *own* the experiences he self-ascribes; they don't seem to him to be his. They are for him objects like any other object of which he has knowledge. While Michael has perfect knowledge of himself, he and what belongs to him have no special and incomparable value for him. He does not care about the mental properties of which he has non-observational knowledge any more than about than any other properties he knows about. His knowledge of himself is therefore only an *indifferent* representation and he lacks self-consciousness. Fafnir, in contrast, cares about what is his in a distinctive way. It does so in an entirely practical way, by taking pleasure and unpleasure (pain) in its mental or bodily states.

Michael is a thinker who lacks any affect. He can be compared to rare extreme cases of Cotard Syndrome. There are some Cotard patients who doubt that they exist or they have even come to the belief that they don't exist. In their place is a machine or a collective of things.[17] Consider Gerrans's description of such a severe case:

> In this type of case [Cotard's] the patient conceives of herself as nothing more than a locus, not of experience, because, due to the complete suppression of affect, her perceptions and cognitions are not annexed to her body, but of the registration of the passage of events. She has effectively effaced herself from the universe*: nothing which occurs is of any significance to her and, hence, she describes the world without implicating herself in that description.*
> (Gerrans 1999, 603-4, my emphasis)

The fact that the patient no longer distinguishes between herself and everything else does not mean that she no longer has privileged access to her thinking and feeling. Such patients can still attend to their mental activities and they will immediately know that thinking is going on.[18] Yet, they don't think of themselves as distinct from other things in the world. Why? Nothing is of distinctive concern to them and hence they no longer operate according to a distinction between self and non-self. In this respect they and Michael are alike.

The case of Michael suggests that infallible and complete knowledge of events that manifest one's capacities for thought do not constitute mental ownership. Michael has privileged access to all experiences and thoughts that are exercises of his faculties, yet given that he neither values nor disvalues them in taking pleasure or being pained by them, these experiences and thoughts are just some further things he

knows of, although in a special way. He doesn't own it in the way you own your experiences. The affectless Michael cannot even comprehend 'why it should attach any greater value to the distinction between itself and the rest of the world than to the numerous differences between things in general that presented themselves to its notice' (Lotze 1885 I, 250-1/1856, 273).

Michael's case points us to a serious problem for the epistemic view of mental ownership: one can have non-observational knowledge about something without valuing it or being concerned about it. Campbell's view specifies a distinction between things we can know of without observation and ones we can't. But this distinction is not the distinction between what is *me* and *mine* and everything else. If I have non-observational knowledge of x, it is still an open question whether x is of value or disvalue and hence, of interest.[19] If I take pleasure in x, this question is closed. Taking pleasure in x is a way of evaluating x and taking an interest in it. Hence, we need to incorporate felt evaluations – enjoyment and taking displeasure – into an account of mental ownership if we want to do justice to the import of this notion. I will make a proposal how one can do so in section 7.

5. Objections and Replies

For Lotze those thoughts and experiences seem to belong to me whose value is immediately felt; everything else is for me just a part of the universe and not of distinctive concern. The sense of ownership is non-conceptual and non-epistemic as Fafnir's case illustrates. It is also prior to the Fichtean *Anstoss*. In reflecting on what it takes for an experience to be mine, I can become aware of the distinction between self/not-self without already appealing to the distinction between myself and an external object.

So far, so good. There are four pressing objections to Lotze's answer to the Awareness Question. Let's see whether we can answer them.

First, we say 'I can feel your pain'. Can't I feel Fafnir's pain when I see it writhing with pain? We can be concerned about the mental acts of others, evaluate them positively or negatively and feel joy that they feel joy and so on. But only I can enjoy or be pained my thinking and perceiving. I may be saddened and pained by my friend's thinking *that I let him down*. Here we have a propositional object – a fact or proposition – that is the content of my emotion. What pains me is *that you are currently thinking that I let you down* or I take displeasure in *learning* that you are thinking that I let you down. I am not taking displeasure in or am pained in your thought.

Lotze cannot have emotional attitudes in mind that have a propositional content. After all, the worm cannot have propositional attitudes. Hence such propositional pleasure and pain are irrelevant for mental ownership. Only *non-propositional* pleasure or pain in something x, can constitute ownership of x.[20] Non-propositional pleasure or enjoyment is *de se*: when I take pleasure in hearing the melody, the thing that takes pleasure is the same as the one who hears. At the most basic level such non-propositional pleasures or pains make for the distinction between self and non-self that grounds concern for ourselves and our parts. There are also propositional pleasures whose content contains the first-person concept such as my pleasure that I (myself) won the race. But Fafnir does not possess any concept and cannot have such self-directed pleasures/pains.

Second, prima facie, I can enjoy bodily activities such as running. If we are interested in *mental* ownership do we need to add a further condition to Lotze's conditions?[21] No, on closer inspection one will say that we enjoy these activities

because they give us experiences that we enjoy. Strictly speaking, we only enjoy mental activities. For example, it makes no sense to say that one enjoyed a taste full stop. We need to say in which way and by means of the activity of which sense you enjoyed it. If we do so, the proper object of enjoyment will surface. I enjoyed *tasting* the wine by drinking and savoring it.

Third, all mental activities that are exercises of my mental powers should have immediate for-me-ness, they should seem to be mine. But what about feeling pleasure and pain themselves? Brentano wrote with reference to Lotze:

> One could object that the hypothesis that every mental activity is accompanied by pleasure or displeasure would necessarily lead to an infinite complexity of simultaneous acts, since pleasure and displeasure are themselves mental activities. (Brentano 1924, 115/2009, 211)

Indeed. If taking pleasure (pain) has immediate for-me-ness, I need to take pleasure (pain) in my taking pleasure (pain). Are there, then, second-order pleasure and so on? An infinite regress seems to loom.

To my knowledge Lotze himself never addressed this problem. However, the regress does not get going if pleasure and pain are also directed on themselves. And this seems independently plausible. Consider Caston's example:

> [W]e like having fun. That is, when we enjoy doing something (and in so far as we enjoy doing it), we *enjoy* our enjoyment. What it is to enjoy ϕ-ing is not, to be sure, what it is to enjoy enjoying ϕ-ing. But it does not follow from that this higher-order enjoyment is a distinct token activity from the simple enjoyment of

> ϕ-ing. The connection between the two, in fact, seems to be *conceptually* necessary. To imagine someone who genuinely enjoys an activity, but is indifferent to its enjoyment, who fails to enjoy it, seems repugnant to the very notion. It would be comparable to someone not liking having fun. Any grounds we might have for denying that someone enjoys his enjoyment undermines the initial claim that he was actually enjoying ϕ-ing in the first place. (Caston 2002, 795)

Caston rightly points out one that one need not *notice* one's enjoyment of one's enjoyment, and that one can have further attitudes to one's enjoyment: one can be repulsed by one's enjoyment, desire not to have it, etc. (ibid, 795–6). We can therefore offer Lotze a promising solution to his problem.

Fourth, do all activities that go on at a time seem to be mine because they are felt? Yes, answered Lotze:

> Whatever stimulations, then, the soul may undergo, from each one we must expect an impression of pain or pleasure, and more accurate self-scrutiny, so far as it can recognise the washed-out colours of these impressions, confirms our conjecture, unable as it is to find any manifestation of our mental activity not accompanied by some feeling. The colours are indeed washed-out in the matured mind, in contrast to the preponderant interest which we bestow on particular ends of our personal endeavours, and deliberate attention is needed to detect them, just as microscopic examination is necessary to trace the regular formation of invisible objects, which the unassisted eye is wont carelessly to overlook. To each simple sensation, each colour, each tone,

> corresponds originally a special degree of pain or pleasure; but, accustomed as we are to note these impressions only in their significance as marks of objects, whose import and notion are of consequence to us, we observe the worth of these simple objects only when we throw ourselves with concentrated attention into their content. (Lotze 1885 I, 242/1856, 262)

If it seems to us that there are affect-free mental episodes, this is so because the feeling is like a 'washed-out colour'. We had this feeling many times before, became accustomed to it and it no longer commands our attention. Yet, it is there and can be discovered if we can train our attention on it.

Brentano followed Lotze in this point.[22] But Lotze's assumption of the universal presence of felt evaluations is difficult to make plausible. Whenever Lotze's opponent claims that he thinks a thought without taking pleasure and pain in it, Lotze will reply that the emotion is 'washed-out'; it is so faint that we don't notice it. Now this response saddles Lotze with the problem of giving us an independent reason to say that a felt evaluation is present, yet unnoticed. After all, the assumption that the felt evaluation is missing is simpler.[23] But if there are activities that don't feel pleasant or painful to you, these will not seem to belong to you. Yet, it is in many cases implausible that you don't own them. I may neither take pleasure nor pain in a mental activity, yet it can seem to be mine: I can attend to it, exercise power over it etc.

So far Lotze has achieved something: he has provided a sufficient condition for mental ownership and made plausible that the complete absence of felt evaluations is incompatible with their being a mental subject that is for him or herself an object of distinctive concern. Since such a subject can still have privileged access to its present

mental activities, Lotze's considerations give us a reason for re-examining of epistemic accounts of mental ownership. But Lotze himself has not provided necessary and sufficient conditions of mental ownership. While this makes his account of mental ownership at best incomplete, it does not bear negatively on the further role felt evaluations are supposed to play in first-person thought. Without having taken pleasure and pain in some activities and continuing to do, a thinker could not acquire and exercise a first-person concept like ours. Or so I will argue in the next sections.

6. The Temptation to Misconstrue the First-Person Concept

According to Lotze, first-person thought is based on conceptually and metaphysically prior immediate for-me-ness: 'all self-consciousness rests on the ground of an immediate self-feeling [unmittelbares Selbstgefühl] that cannot arise from the recognition of an opposition to the external world' (See Lotze 1885 II, 680/1864, 567; my translation).

Immediately after stating the connection between self-consciousness and feeling Lotze commented further:

> Self-consciousness is only the later attempt to analyze this experienced fact with the tools of cognition; to generate a thought image of the self who grasps itself with the vivacity of feeling and in this way *to put it artificially in the realm of objects in which it does not belong*. (Lotze 1885 II, 680/1864, 568; my translation and emphasis)

If we form a concept of ourselves – the thought image of the self – by analyzing what

is distinctive of first-person thought, we are driven to an error: we conceive of us as an object like any other.[24] Later Wundt made a similar observation about philosophical treatments of self-consciousness:

> The natural development of self-consciousness already contains the preparation of the most abstract formations which philosophy has given this concept; only it [philosophy] loves to reverse the process of development by putting the abstract self at the beginning. [But] even the speculative philosopher is not able to detach his self consciousness from bodily presentation and general feeling which form the sensual background of the self concept. (Wundt 1880, 219; my translation)

Why do we make such a mistake? In 'Seele and Seelenleben' Lotze gives an account of the genesis of this mistake:

> The faculty of knowledge [die Erkenntnis] can easily attain some concept of the soul, can determine the soul by the essential mark of such a reflexive relation to itself, but from this does not follow that we think of this so found substratum as coinciding [zusammenfallen] with us with that intimacy [Innigkeit] as it is always the case when we speak the name 'I'. (Lotze 1848, 123-5; my translation)

We easily form a concept that is such that if it is employed, its referent is the same as thinker employing it. Why is this concept easily attained? What strikes us when we reflect on features of those thoughts that we express by means of the first-person

pronoun is that the thinker of the thought is guaranteed to be the object of the thought. This feature captures our attention and we gloss the first-person concept as 'thinker of these thoughts'. It seems to me that this part of Lotze's error theory captures nicely many contemporary accounts of the first-person concept. [25]

Now Lotze argued that *the concept so attained is not the concept expressed by our use of 'I'*. For when we refer to ourselves by means of 'I' the coincidence of referent and referring subject has a particular intimacy. He elaborates this thought on the same page:

> *One easily sees that someone who says I to himself does not have a mere theoretical consciousness of the coincidence of the subject with the object*, but he feels that this fate befalls himself right now, while he thinks of the general case. Just as little as someone could recognize that it was his limb that was in pain if he did not evidently feel this inexpressible coincidence of the event with *his* self, without this feeling of unity with ourselves we would not form the concept of the self with the energetic inwardness [energischen Innerlichkeit] that belongs to it. *We would talk of the self just as we talk of pain in general, as of an object whose nature we know but that is of no further concern to us* [uns aber weiter nichts angeht]. (Lotze 1846, 135; my translation and emphasis)

When we use 'I', we are not only aware that the thinker is the object of thought, we also have a particular concern for the object of thought. The second aspect is missing if we only focus on the reflexivity of the first-person. Michael, the omniscient but affectless angel, can master and employ such a reflexive concept. He knows that for

any use of the concept that its user is the referent of the use of the concept. Yet, he cannot take a distinctive interest in the object he thinks of in this way. When he uses the concept he represents himself as one object like any other object. Hence, the reference-rule for the concept leaves something out that is essential for first-person thought. When we think of ourselves by means of the first-person concept, we don't think of ourselves as one object among others.

The same problem arises for epistemic accounts of first-person thought. Setiya gives a good exposition of the basic idea that fuels such accounts:

> [T]he capacity for self-knowledge is a condition for first-person thought. The relation by which I refer to myself in the first person is not simply that of being the thinker of these thoughts, but being the object of immediate knowledge. The first person concept refers to the one whose thoughts can be known in this way. (Setiya 2015, 459)

Again Michael could think of himself by exercising this concept, that is, he can think of himself as the object whose thoughts he knows immediately and yet be indifferent to the thoughts so known and consequently the object that has them. These thoughts and the thinker are for him just further things in the universe that are of no particular concern. Again there is no connection between first-person thought and distinctive concern. Setiya agrees with this point:

> Having the capacity for immediate knowledge of someone does not justify non-instrumental interest in his well-being. Why care so much about the one you know first-hand, without the need for inference, whose beliefs you can

> access in a special way? (Setiya 2015, 467)

Lotze's worm/angel example makes the intuition that motivates Setiya's question vivid. Why should the property *x is known about in a special way* and the property *x is of distinctive concern* always go hand in hand?

Lotze concludes that I can think of x in the first-person way without having special concern for x. Setiya's *modus ponens* is Lotze's *modus tollens*. It is a fact that we care for something in a distinctive way if we think of it in the first-person way. A philosophical account of the first-person concept that does not capture this aspect of first-person thought systematically misleading. It misleads us about the fact that without felt evaluations we cannot think of ourselves with 'that intimacy [Innigkeit] as it is always the case when we speak the name 'I'' (op cit.).

Unfortunately Lotze does not flesh out his suggestion about the first-person concept. So what must the first-person concept be like such that applying it makes its referent an object of concern?

7. Correcting the Mistake: The First-Person Concept as a Thick Concept

Setiya endorses the view that he capacity for self-knowledge is a condition for first-person thought and therefore rejects that first-person thought entails specific concern for the referent of a token of the first-person concept. Lotze endorsed what Setiya rejects and needs therefore to find a different basis for first-person thought. It is not the capacity for self-knowledge, but the capacity for enjoying/being pained by mental acts is a condition for first-person thought. The first-person concept refers to the thing that generates those experiences and thoughts that can be immediately felt in non-propositional pleasure and pain.

We can build on this idea if we think of the first-person concept as individuated by a pattern of use, its conceptual role. Let's first look at a well-known model: the logical constants. The sense of logical constants like 'not' or 'and' is fixed by introduction and elimination rules. We know the sense of logical words if we know how they contribute to the logical potential of sentences that contain them. For example, I master the concept expressed by 'and' if and only if I use the following introduction and elimination rules for it:

&-Introduction	&-Elimination
A, B	A & B
A & B	A, B

Campbell (2004, 207) applies this model to the first-person concept. He argues that mastery of 'I' consists, in part, in moving from perceptions to judgments involving 'I' and from such judgments to actions:

I-Introduction	I-Elimination
Perception: x is to the right	x is to my right
x is to my right	Motor: to reach x, move to the right

When I see an object to my right, the way my experience presents the world does not include me, only an object that looks to be to the right. But if the world *looks that way to me*, I am entitled to judge that the object is to *my* right. What makes inferences governed by I-introduction good inferences has to do with first-person free content as well as the mode in which the content is given. That it visually seems to me that there

is, for instance, a tree to the right is part of the reason/entitlement to judge that there is a tree to my right. If the same content were presented via testimony, I would not be entitled to make the transition to the judgment that there is a tree to *my* right.[26] If a thinker's transitions from perception to judgment and from judgment to action are governed by rules like the one above, she masters the first-person concept *in part*. These rules have an epistemic character. If I exemplify this pattern of use, my first-person judgments will be justified and my actions rational in light of my desires and beliefs.[27]

The pattern of use described so far gives us only, as Lotze put it, 'a theoretical consciousness of the coincidence of the subject with the object' (Lotze 1848, 135; my translation). It could be exemplified in Michael's thinking. The pattern of use defining the conceptual role of the first-person concept needs to be enriched by further rules that connect felt evaluations and judgments. A first stab at these rules can be gleaned from Lotze's remarks on pain and pleasure:

I*-Introduction	I*-Elimination
Feeling: ϕ-ing is good/bad	I am ϕ-ing
I am ϕ-ing	Feeling: ϕ-ing is good/bad.

Read these rules as saying that if something x takes pleasure (unpleasure) in an activity ϕ-ing, x is entitled to judge that she herself is ϕ-ing without a further reason. The explanation of what makes this rule a good one is similar to the perceptual case. If I am aware of the goodness/badness of an act or activity *by taking pleasure* in it (*being pained by it*), it is my activity. Hence, the rules are truth preserving. Since the basis for this judgment is a felt evaluation, I evaluate ϕ-ing and I thereby take an

interest in ϕ-ing. If I take an interest in ϕ-ing, I indirectly take an interest in the ϕ-er. It seems difficult to see what taking an interest in a thinker would amount to, if not an interest in specific properties they have. The object I am referring to with the first-person concept is an object of concern because the conceptual role that individuates the concept is in part given by moves from felt evaluations to self-ascriptions.

The felt evaluations are basic in the following sense. If the subject cannot make transitions from felt evaluations to judgments, she has no conception of herself that is similar to the one's we have, namely as a subject of a distinctive concern. If the thinker cannot make these moves, they have no first-person concept. I take this point to explicate what Lotze has in mind when he said that 'all self-consciousness rests on the ground of an immediate self-feeling'.

So Lotze's basic idea, expressed in contemporary terminology, is that a complete specification of the conceptual role of the first-person concept must include felt evaluations. Given that pain and pleasure are felt evaluations, the first-person concept has an evaluative component. It is a thick concept that combines evaluative and non-evaluative features like the concept *murder*.

Conclusion

Lotze's angel/worm example makes the role of felt evaluations in mental ownership and first-person thought vivid. Lotze suggests that our first-person concept is a thick concept and that no purely descriptive concept can be our first-person concept. While he does not develop an account of this concept, he gives us the materials to do so and to criticize the shortcomings in alternative proposals.[28]

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[1] James's remark was inspired by Lotze, see ibid. See Kraushaar 1936 for Lotze's influence on James's philosophy of mind. Brentano referred to Lotze throughout his *Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint* (more in section 5). Fréchette (2013, 658f) provides an informative overview of Lotze's influence the phenomenological tradition. On Lotze's main work *Mikrokosmos*, see Beiser 2016.

[2] See also Lotze 1885 II, 679-80/1864, 567-8.

[3] See, for example, Campbell 1999 and 2002 and Rosenthal 2005, 354ff.

[4] See Lotze 1885 I, 248/1856, 270-1.

[5] For a discussion of the different concepts that are supposed to capture this and related phenomena see Guillot 2017.

[6] See Lotze 1885 II, 679-80/1864, 567-8. I follow Fréchette (2013, 659) in translating ‘Fürsichsein’ as ‘for me-ness’. The original translation as ‘immediate self-existence’ does not get close to the literal meaning.

[7] See, for instance, Fichte (1795, 258 [I, 347]). The noun ‘Anstoss’ is usually translated as ‘check’, but one gets a better sense of Fichte’s meaning if one considers the verb ‘anstossen’: if one moves one may bump into something (anstossen) and hence once movement is hindered. See Smith (2002, 153) for discussion.

[8] I have translated ‘‘willkührlich’ as ‘freely chosen’. See the entry in Grimm’s *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1854).

[9] See Helmholtz 1878, 241. See also Wundt 1880, 219.

[10] See Lipps 1901, 12.

[11] See Lotze 1885 II, 678/1864, 565-6.

[12] The back reference given in Lotze 1885 II is to pages 241ff. This is close, but incorrect. The German edition, Lotze 1864, gives the correct reference. I have corrected therefore the reference.

[13] For Lotze’s purposes it is not important that the pleasure or pains are sensory or bodily. We might replace the crushed worm with a spirit that can take pleasure and pain in its experiences, but is not sophisticated enough to have propositional knowledge.

[14] See Pierson 1988, 117f.

[15] Lotze 1846, 126.

[16] See Block (1995, 4.2.1) on a primitive sense of ownership that is independent of self-ascription.

[17] See the cases discussed in Billon forthcoming, 10ff.

[18] See ibid.

[19] See Setiya 2015, 467. I will come back to this point.

[20] On propositional pleasure see Feldman 2004, sect. 4.1.

[21] Lotze (1846, 127) also consider ownership of a body. In brief, those parts of the world are my body whose states and/or changes feel pleasurable/painful to me and/or whose movements are my successful tryings.

[22] See Brentano 1924, 115/2009, 210ff.

[23] Many thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing this point.

[24] See also Lotze (1846, 128) on thought images that are not true to the nature of the self.

[25] In current work this idea is articulated, for instance, in Peacocke 2015, 83.

[26] Peacocke (2015b, 170) elaborates this further. Under normal circumstances, the body to whose right the tree is located is my body. So, under normal circumstances, the truth of the content that the tree is to the right when perceptually entertained guarantees the truth of content the tree is to my right.

[27] See Campbell 2004, 217.

[28] I presented an earlier version of this material at the workshop *Philosophy and the Semantics of 'I'* in Freiburg (Germany) in 2016. I would like to thank the audience for discussion. Special thanks for insightful comments go to Matt Parrott and to an anonymous referee for an extremely helpful report that helped me to improve the paper greatly.